



South Central Regional Library Council is concerned with the current climate of book censorship and challenges occurring both within New York State and around the country. As such, we take this opportunity to affirm the [American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights](#).

The Library Bill of Rights was first adopted on June 19, 1939 by the ALA Council and amended several times, most recently in 2019. Additionally, within the last decade ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee provided [Interpretations](#), which include the history and philosophy of each section of the Library Bill of Rights.

The first tenet of the Library Bill of Rights states:

Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

Recent censorship and attempts at book banning have focused on books written by authors identifying as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Sometimes the identities of authors of historically oppressed and underrepresented groups intersect. SCRLC denounces any such attempts at censorship, which also serve to further marginalize community members who identify with the books, and those who wish to be allies to these communities. Book banning and censorship creates harm, oppression, isolation, and trauma for people from marginalized and oppressed communities.

The second tenet of the Library Bill of Rights states:

Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

SCRLC denounces efforts to prevent librarians from adding diverse materials to library collections—and all educators—to use a wide variety of books in the library and classroom through such tactics as intimidation, threats to personal safety and livelihood, and by creating a climate of fear that can result in silent censorship, i.e., librarians afraid to include challenged books in their collection.

The third tenet of the Library Bill of Rights states:

Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

The ability to offer to their community a diverse collection of materials is a core value of librarianship. When librarians cannot uphold these core values as articulated in the Library Bill of Rights, they are prevented from fulfilling their professional responsibilities. They are forced to create libraries that are not inclusive and welcoming to all of their community members.

Furthermore, all libraries and library systems within New York State support education and learning. Library systems, including SCRLC, are chartered under the NYS Board of Regents, which recognized the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion when they developed their [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#) in April 2021. From the Board of Regents' website: "Culturally responsive-sustaining (CR-S) education is grounded in a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning." Access to diverse books is certainly included in "multiple expressions of diversity." Therefore, librarians adhering to the Library Bill of Rights also operate within the Board of Regents' Framework.

Those who initiate book challenges are often ignorant of both the Library Bill of Rights and the Board of Regents' Framework. It is our responsibility as members of the library community to uphold and educate the public when book challenges arise.

If you face a challenge, you are not alone in this. The American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom has compiled [resources to help library workers](#). They also offer confidential support—contact them via email at the [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#); or, use their [online form](#). Additionally, reach out to the [New York Library Association](#) to report a challenge. Report the challenge even if assistance is not required.

Yours in partnership,

The South Central Library Council Board of Trustees

July 2022